

**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database**

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
Montana Historical Society  
PO Box 201202, 1410 8<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **1919 West Main Street**

Historic Address (if applicable): **1919 West Main Street**

City/Town: **Bozeman**

Site Number: **24 GA 1794**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Gallatin**

Historic Name: **Robert F. Dye, Inc.**

Original Owner(s): **Robert F. Dye**

Current Ownership ☒ Private ☐ Public

Current Property Name: **Billion Auto Group**

Owner(s): **CVS Pharmacy**

Owner Address: **1919 West Main Street  
Bozeman, MT**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **2S** Range: **5E**

**SE ¼ SE ¼ NE ¼** of Section: **11**

Lot(s): **1 & 2A**

Block(s): **8**

Addition: **West Park Manor 1<sup>st</sup> Addition** Year of  
Addition: **Unknown**

USGS Quad Name: **Bozeman** Year: **1987**

Historic Use: **Car dealership**

Current Use: **Car dealership**

Construction Date: **1968** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☒ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference [www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2](http://www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2)

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **495079** Northing: **5058492**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Date of this document: **June 17, 2010**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3518 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(707) 364-0697**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☒ yes ☐ no

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Date: 11/17/2010

Evaluator: Kate Hampton

Comments:

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

Site Number: **24 GA 1794**

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

☒ See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Googie** If Other, specify:

Property Type: **Commercial** Specific Property Type: **Car dealership**

Architect: **Oswald Berg Jr.** Architectural Firm/City/State: **Oswald Berg Jr. Architects, Bozeman, MT**

Builder/Contractor: **Emil Martel & Sons** Company/City/State: **Bozeman, MT**

Source of Information: **HABS documentation**

**Location and setting.** The Billion car dealership is a one-story building with an irregular footprint. The auto showroom portion of the building faces south onto W. Main Street, while auxiliary uses, which include a 'quick lube,' an auto glass shop, and offices, extend toward the rear of the lot in a series of adjoined buildings.

The building is prominently located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of S. 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue (also known as Route 412) and W. Main Street (also known as State Route 191). It is located toward the southeast corner of the block, in the area closest to the intersection. In addition to the streets named above, the block is bounded by W. Beall Street on the north, and the curving N. 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west.

This stretch of W. Main Street is characterized by large and small commercial sites surrounded by parking. To the northwest of the block that the Billion Dealership is located on is Kirk Park, a large park with playing fields.

**Materials.** The materials of the Billion Dealership include laminated wood 'ribs' and cladding that includes stucco-finished composite panels and plate glass, contemporary corrugated metal, and concrete block. Aluminum-frame windows and doors and metal overhead garage doors complete the list of materials on the building. The foundation is concrete and the roof is built-up.

**Massing and design.** The Billion Dealership today is comprised of the main showroom building at the front of the lot and several adjunct additions to the rear. The main showroom building is a faceted, nearly round building with curved, laminated wood ribs that extend from the base of the building to beyond the roof. At the base of this building is a short concrete stem wall. The lower portion of the building is glazed and the upper portion is finished in an incised, stucco-finished, composite panel. Both the windows and panels are set within an aluminum frame. The building has deep eaves under which can be seen the laminated beams that support the roof and eaves. A tall fascia that is finished with stucco and capped with a narrow metal coping covers this ensemble. Around the base of the building are parking stalls. Signs for "customer parking" are painted on the windows.

An entry accessed by a ramp with a metal rail is located at the southeast corner of this building. It is composed of a single, aluminum frame door with full-height glass. To the left of the door is a broad, full-height window and to the right is a narrow window of the same height. Two narrow transom windows are located above this ensemble. Where the showroom joins the service wing to the north is a single pedestrian door with full-height glass, accessed by an open concrete stoop with three steps. This door has a full-height sidelight to the left.

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### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

To the rear of the showroom is a long rectangular building that houses the service department. It is constructed of concrete block. This wing has seven entry bays with overhead doors. Each door has six large, horizontally-oriented lights. Each bay is separated by projecting pilasters of concrete block. Toward the front of this wing is a pedestrian door with full-height glass. Also in this location is a small concrete block building. This addition has a shallow-sloped shed roof and a two-part window with an aluminum frame and concrete sill on the east face. This wing also displays deep eaves covered by a tall fascia finished with a narrow metal coping.

To the rear of this wing is another addition with a rectangular footprint that is perpendicular to the service wing. This addition is also constructed of concrete block. It is primarily oriented toward the north or rear of the building. On the north façade are six overhead doors within seven bays. The overhead doors are of the same design as the doors on the service wing. The second bay from the left or east is a storefront. It has a pedestrian door with full-height glass within an anodized aluminum frame and a slightly horizontally-oriented, fixed, single light window. Both are covered with a tall canopy on which is painted, "The Pit Stop Quick Lube." There is one bay with an overhead door on the south façade of this addition. On the west façade are two flush, metal pedestrian doors.

The west façade of the building adjacent to the addition described above displays a shallow addition with three overhead doors and one pedestrian door. This addition is slightly taller than the adjacent addition to the south, and is clad in contemporary corrugated metal siding. On the south side is a roll-up metal door at loading dock height and a flush metal pedestrian door.

The central west façade is the rear of the east-facing service bays. It displays the same overhead doors separated by projecting concrete pilasters as the east façade of this wing.

To the south is another slightly projecting wing that is clad in corrugated metal and has a roll-up metal door of the same design as the roll-up door facing it to the north. To the left of this door is an aluminum-frame, two-part sliding window. The west face of this wing has two openings, a two-part flush metal door and a four-panel overhead door.

**Landscaping and site design.** Almost all the area around the building is paved in asphalt and used for parking. A landscaped strip at the front or south side of the site is planted in lawn, as is the planting strip on neighboring properties. There is a public sidewalk on the east and south sides of the parcel.

**Changes over time.** Changes to the building appear to be as follows. It appears as though the auto showroom and service bays are the original portion of the building. Additions have been constructed to the north and west to add service bays and provide for additional uses. The upper portion of the showroom windows have been enclosed with stucco panels. Doors have been altered over time, which is not unusual.

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Site Number: **24 GA 1794**

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

#### Architectural context

The showroom portion of the building is a good example of "Googie" architecture. The original service bays to the north of the building are utilitarian in design, but are integral with the showroom, in that they represent the 'working' part of the auto dealer/service business, while the round showroom building is designed to showcase the automobiles for sale.

Googie architecture grew out of the car culture of southern California beginning in the 1930s. This is a period when commercial building owners and designers began catering to their automobile-driving clients, creating buildings that were eye-catching and meant to be highly visible at automobile speeds and along suburban commercial corridors and highways. This is certainly the case with the Robert F. Dye, Inc. building, although they advertised that they were moving to their suburban location from the eastern edge of downtown Bozeman in order to expand their facility.

These early buildings reflected the interest in conveying speed at this time through streamlined effects. "Googie" is named after a restaurant in Los Angeles designed by California architect John Lautner. It was coined as the name of the architectural style in 1952 by architecture critic Douglas Haskell (*Hess, 1985*). As defined by Haskell, a Googie building had an abstracted appearance, often seemed to 'float' above the ground, without the sense of gravity (in both senses of the word) of ordinary buildings, and displayed modern materials and often a mix of structural systems. Car dealerships, being by definition automobile oriented, often borrowed this style for their showrooms, creating a dramatic backdrop for their merchandise.

The evidence of Googie architecture on this building includes its unusual, eye-catching form and dramatic, curved laminated wood 'ribs.' The original appearance of the main showroom has been somewhat altered by the addition of stucco-clad panels in the upper portion of the windows where there originally was full-height plate glass windows. These would have increased the dramatic appearance of the building, particularly at night, when the interior could have been lit to enhance the display of cars.

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

Site Number: **24 GA 1794**

### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

☒ See Additional Information Page

**History of building.** The Billion car dealership was developed by its original owners, Robert F. Dye and his partner Lou Jones as a GM dealership (*Robert F. Dye, Inc., 2009*). It was designed and constructed by Bozeman architect Oswald Berg Jr. in 1968 to house the dealership, which was originally located at 512 E. Main Street. The property was sold in May 1978 to Joseph Billion. Over the years at least two major additions have been made to the building, the service bays to the north and the two loading bays on the west side of the building.

The area in which the automobile dealership is located was annexed to the city in 1997 as part of the 441-acre Valley West annexation. The property was sold to Susan Pederson in 2002, although JC Billion, Inc. continues to operate the business on the site (*Robert F. Dye, Inc., 2009*). Susan Pederson sold the property to CVS Pharmacy in 2008, who plan to redevelop the site about 2012 for a large, mixed-use commercial development ("*CVS eyes dealership location for store,*" 2008). The Billion Auto Group plans to relocate the business to their property on Huffine Lane in Bozeman

**History of the business.** The Billion Dealership is owned by Joseph C. Billion and his wife Susan. The Billion Auto Group has three business locations in Bozeman and Livingston, the latter in a streamline moderne showroom. There are several divisions within the business that handle sales, financing, a service department and a quick lube business. The business has been in operation at this location since 1978.

### INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

☐ See Additional Information Page

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Bowker, R. R., *American Architects Directory* (First edition). Bowker LLC/American Institute of Architects, 1956 (Second edition, 1962; Third edition, 1970).

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*Montana Architectural Drawings - Montana State University Digital Initiatives*  
<http://arc.lib.montana.edu/architect/index.php> accessed March 2010.

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Ricker, Amanda, "CVS eyes dealership location for store," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, June 17, 2008.

Ritter, Nicole Rosenleaf, "Thanks a Billion: Local dealership owner would like to set an example for charitable giving – but he would prefer to do it out of the spotlight," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, December 19, 2005.

*Robert F. Dye, Inc. Automotive Dealership & Service Center HABS Level II Survey*. Prepared by Intrinsik Architecture, Inc. Prepared for City of Bozeman. March 2009.

Schontzler, Gail, Annexation proposal takes a step," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, July 2, 1997.

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Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Joe Billion's farther, Henry Billion, entered the car sales business in Sioux Falls in 1935. He began in sales, eventually owning his own dealership. Joe Billion joined his father in the business but decided to open his own dealership in Bozeman. Both father and son, as partners in the business, relocated to the city from Sioux Falls in 1978 (*"Thanks a Billion . . . 2005*). Henry Billion died in July 1, 1991.

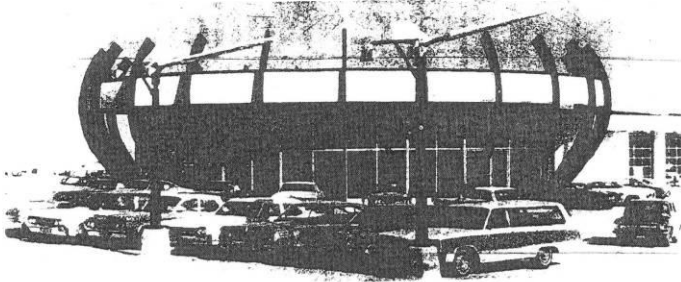
**Architect Oswald Berg Jr.** Oswald Berg Jr. was a Montana native, born into a ranching family in Lewistown, Montana on October 8, 1918. He attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota and then Washington State College (now University), where he was awarded a BS in Architecture in 1941. He worked for the Civil Service Commission and the Department of the Navy in Washington DC during World War II and attended night school at George Washington University. After the war he was employed by the college architecture office at WSU and as an architect for N.W. Fabricators, Inc. until opening his own firm of Oswald Berg Jr. Architect in 1949. Between 1949 and 1983 Oswald practiced under the names of Oswald Berg Jr. and Associates, Berg-Grabow and Partners, BGS Architects, and Berg-Grabow-Schofield.

Berg had a long and prolific career, designing over 200 buildings. He and his partners designed churches and chapels, schools and university buildings, banks, libraries, shops, some commercial buildings, and some residential projects. He designed several buildings for Montana State College in Bozeman and Montana State College in Havre. Among his most well-known buildings the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman (1971) and the South Hedges dormitory and food service building at MSU – Bozeman. He designed projects throughout the state of Montana, as well as Wyoming and Oregon. He taught at Montana State College as a visiting professor and was licensed as an engineer in addition to being an architect.

BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE Friday, May 3, 1968 13

# **CONGRATULATIONS**

TO  
**ROBERT F. DYE, Inc.**



GENERAL CONTRACTOR  
**EMIL MARTEL & SONS**

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR  
**MANNIX ELECTRICAL INC.**

MECHANICAL CONTRACTOR  
**FULLERTON PLUMBING & HEATING**  
HAMILTON, MONTANA

INSULATION SERVICE & SUPPLY  
Billings, Montana

JOHNSON'S SERV. CO.  
Great Falls, Montana

GLASS  
**PITTSBURGH PAINT & GLASS CO.**  
Butte, Montana

PAINTING  
**K-DECORATORS**  
Billings, Montana

PAINTING & DECORATING  
**GALLATIN VALLEY FURNITURE CO.**

Advertisement, *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, 1968

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Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

Site Number: **24 GA 1794**

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☒ Individually ☐ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **Commerce** Period of Significance: **1968**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

The Billion car dealership building is significant as an excellent example of Googie architecture. While the building's integrity is only fair, the dramatic and iconic form of the showroom ensures that this portion of the building is what are most noticeable, not building additions or window replacements.

The building is also a good and very typical example of where and why Googie buildings were constructed. It is an auto showroom (and service) building, which was a popular building type for Googie architecture. It was constructed for a company that wanted to expand, and chose a suburban area outside the city limits. Googie architecture was often constructed along suburban arterials. Its eye-catching forms and expressions were designed to attract notice from drivers traveling at higher speeds than would be the case on downtown urban streets. Finally, Googie is known as an auto-related architectural style. This is also the case in both the form and use of this building.

The building is scheduled to be demolished and the site redeveloped some time before 2012. HABS documentation was prepared for the structure.

## INTEGRITY


☐ See Additional Information Page

The building displays fair integrity. It has integrity of location. Design has been altered in both the form of the building and some details. The setting is likely similar to what it was historically, or within the historic period of the building (note that the latest Sanborn maps for this area date to 1943, and at that time this area was outside the city limits). Newer materials have been added to the building, including stucco panels and corrugated metal siding. Workmanship is intact. The feeling and association of the building is intact. In summary, the building retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. It does not retain integrity of design and materials.

# GRAND OPENING

## MAY 12-20

### Robert F. Dye is NOW J. C. BILLION, INC.



**ATTN.: All our good customers and friends in Bozeman and Gallatin County.**

**Help us welcome J. C. Billion, Inc. to Bozeman!** We have chosen to sell the assets of Robert F. Dye, Inc. to a young man from South Dakota, Mr. Joseph C. Billion.

Mr. Billion is now a permanent resident of Bozeman, Montana, having purchased a home west of town. He comes to us with a lifetime of experience in the automobile business and a fine reputation as a citizen and businessman.

We feel confident that J. C. Billion, Inc. will continue to provide the Bozeman area with the fair and honest automotive leadership you have come to expect from Robert F. Dye, Inc.

We wish to thank all our customers and friends for their great support over the years and we urge everyone to stop down May 12-20. Take advantage of the free refreshments and cookies as you look over the great selection of new cars and trucks. Cadillac, GMC Trucks and Datsun.

**If you have had any trouble with your car or truck, now is the time to look around and get acquainted during the Grand Opening Sale.**

There are now 150 new cars and trucks in stock, ready for immediate delivery. We are trading, now is the time to trade again and welcome to Bozeman Joe Billion.

Sincerely,

*Robert F. Dye*  
Robert F. Dye

*Mary Hoffman*  
Mary Hoffman

*Lloyd L. Hale*  
Lloyd L. Hale

*Frank Bailey*  
Frank Bailey

**Free Refreshments**

## TREMENDOUS SAVINGS

### Over 150 New Cars and Trucks in Stock!

We've drastically slashed prices on every new and used car in stock. Come in and get acquainted . . . enjoy free refreshments and take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to save like never before!

The same great people, the same great products,  
with a proud new name

# J.C. BILLION INC.

## OLDSMOBILE • PONTIAC • CADILLAC • GMC • DATSUN

1919 West Main • 586-5483

Roy Sternhagen Home: 587-7175    Dick Brink Home: 586-5704    Art Davis Home: 388-6740    Sam Reiter Home: 587-7350    Pete Cole Home: 586-6371

Advertisement, Bozeman Daily Chronicle, 1978

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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Description: **Auto showroom, viewed from south**



Description: **Building overview, viewed from southeast**

**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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Description: **Main entry, northeast facade**



Description: **Original service bays, east facade**

**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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Description: **Rear additions, viewed from northeast**



Description: **West façade, rear (north) portion**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

Site Number: **24 GA 1794**



Description: **West façade, central portion**

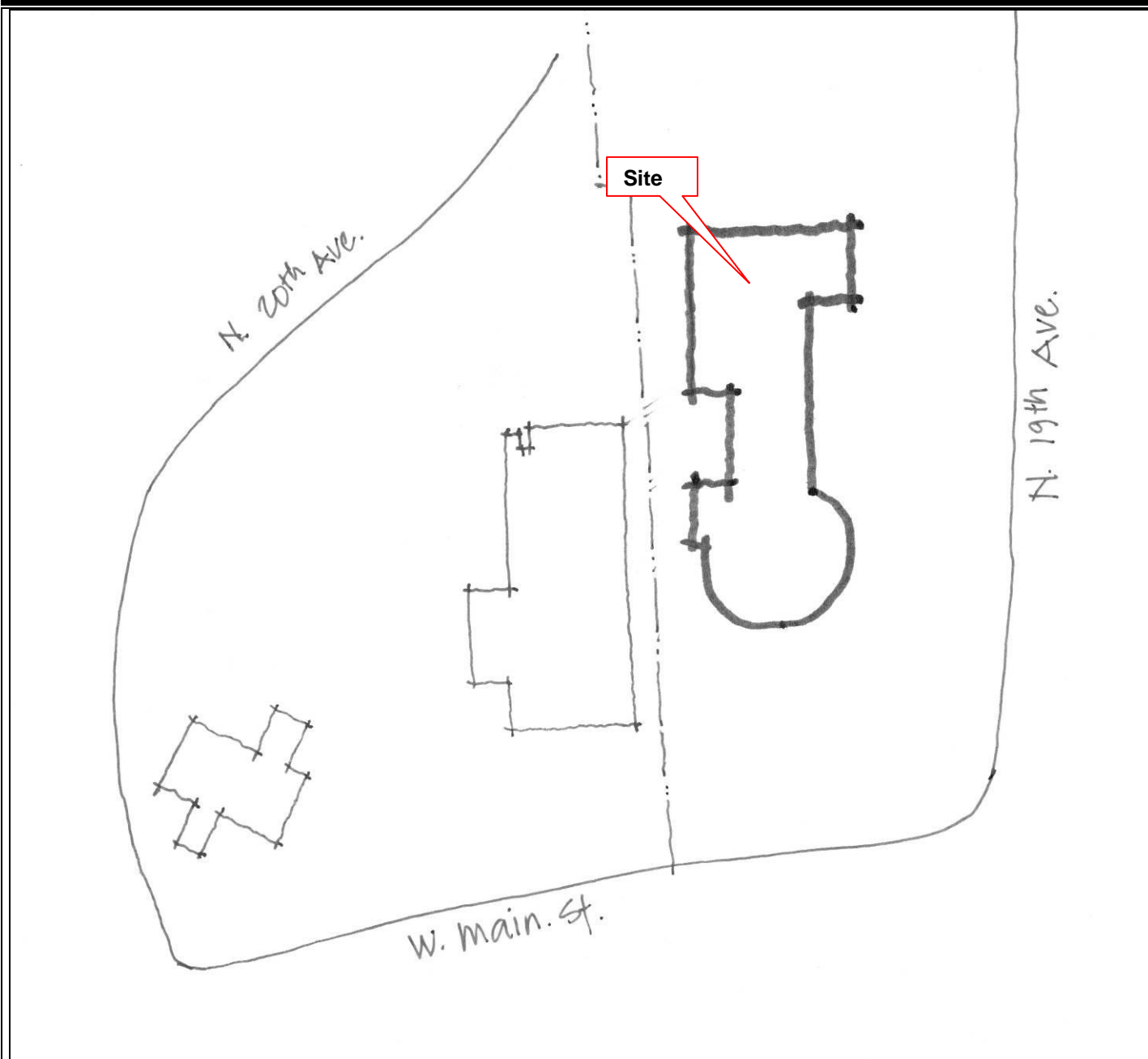


Description: **West façade, south portion**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
SITE MAP

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Property Name: **Billion Car Dealership**

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